

## Top 10 things I've learned about adoption (and wished I'd known sooner)

1. Don't tell people things about your child that you haven't told him. It's his story to tell, not yours.

2. Your child might, for a time, believe everyone was adopted, and may be surprised and/or confused to learn that's not the case. Your child might think adoption is the best thing in the world—until her peers inform her otherwise.

3. The media are biased against adoption, and your child may pick up on that. Be prepared to address it. Silence may convey to your child that you agree with the media.

4. It's OK not to answer people's nosy or too personal questions about adoption or your child, even if it's a question from your mother!

5. School brings on new issues for the adoptee.

6. So does adolescence.

7. Expect to hear "You're not my real mother" or some variation of this phrase at some point in your parenting experience (usually an angry moment). It's normal.

8. Realize that your child thinks about her birthparents more often than you'd expect. At some point, your child might reflect: "I wish I grew in your tummy." It's OK.

9. Your child's feelings about adoption will be more caught than taught, so remember that it's not just what you say about adoption to your child, it's what you say about adoption to others. Actions speak louder than words, so never forget that your child is watching.

10. Adoption is a journey, not an event. It is a process, not a moment in time. Enjoy the journey and remember that it was your destiny to be a family formed through adoption!

*This top 10 list, written by Barbara Testa Butz, is excerpted from the book Thriving as an Adoptive Family by David and Renée Sanford.*

## TOUGH QUESTIONS FROM KIDS

### Answer:

Thanking God for food reminds us to be thankful for all that God gives us. Sometimes we think we are thankful when we really aren't. Pausing to give thanks helps us renew our thankfulness. If we just sit down and eat without thanking God every time, we can easily forget to be thankful. We can forget that our food comes from God.

It is also a nice thing to do. We give thanks to God because He is our friend and He has done something kind for us.



# Bulletin

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## Uncomfortable Questions

BY SUE JOHNSON

THE FARMER AT THE PRODUCE STAND SHOOK HIS HEAD. "THEY look so normal," he said. "So American."

I laughed politely. "All three are American. They became naturalized citizens when they were adopted."

He gave my children a stern look. "You kids better be grateful." I mumbled something about being grateful for his produce, paid for the pumpkins and herded my kids away from the stand.

Later, I kept replaying the conversation in my mind. Of course, my kids weren't "grateful" for being adopted from developing-country orphanages. Before long, though, they will reach an age where they will wrestle with questions of identity and culture. They'll wonder, *Why am I here?* The fact that my children have been adopted internationally will add another layer to their questions. They will learn about kids who have lived their entire childhood in orphanages, never having a family to call their own.

My husband and I are preparing for uncomfortable questions, recognizing that it's difficult to understand why some people are removed from bad circumstances and others aren't. We don't know what answers God will reveal to them when the questions begin, but we do know that God's promise to each of us is the same—we all have a future and a hope in Him.



## TOUGH QUESTIONS FROM KIDS

Why do we have to thank God at every meal when He already knows we're thankful?

Answer on back

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# Handle With Care

On a video screen at my wedding reception, God gave me a gift I'll never forget. I saw footage of my wife, Christi, at 3 years old. With her mom by her side, this innocent little girl sat in the bathtub splashing water and singing as if she didn't have a care in the world:

*Oh the Lord is good to me  
And so I thank the Lord  
For giving me the things  
I need*

*The sun and the rain and  
the apple seed*

*Oh the Lord is good to me*

Two weeks later, on the last day of our honeymoon, we found ourselves in the middle of the biggest argument we have had to date. As I sat across from her at dinner defending my perspective, Christi's eyes welled with tears. Without warning,

my mind replayed that precious footage of my wife singing in the bathtub, and my defenses melted. My argument no longer mattered.

How had I allowed myself to become hardened and insensitive to the person I loved most? Rather than being "quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19), I was quick to defend myself, quick to cast blame and slow to be gentle.

So how do couples develop an attitude of gentleness toward each other?

The famous preacher A. W. Tozer wrote that one of the five keys to a deeper spiritual life is to never defend ourselves. When we do, we put up

emotional guards that make us hard and self-centered. In turn, we cast blame in an attempt to protect ourselves.

In my case, my defenses dropped when I remembered the innocence and purity of 3-year-old Christi. The image of her as a child gave me a new perspective, and I began to understand that the same tenderness still lives inside her. From this experience, my wife and I began learning how to treat each other with gentleness. We found that gentleness did not depend on who was right, but on lowering our defenses and handling each other with care.

—Joshua Straub



# Self-Control Made Simple

You can use simple play to help your child prepare for those times when he needs to stay seated and exercise self-control.

Before mealtime, shake out the sillies by dancing and wiggling together. Then take a deep, calming breath; exhale slowly. This conveys to your child that mealtime is a calm time when he should remain seated. Afterward, be active again as you clean up together.

Help your child learn self-control in public places by practicing at home. Pretend your living room is a church, library or school, and shake out your sillies before entering. Then take a deep breath, enter the room and sit down quietly. For an age-appropriate length of time, listen to a story or Bible lesson using an audio book, radio or television. When it's time to leave the imaginary location, be active again.

Work out a signal to use if your child gets restless when he should be calm. For example: Tap his arm twice with one finger, and touch your chin when he looks at you. Smile at him as you take a deep, calming breath together. —Donna Brennan



# The Value of Gratitude

As they begin to gain independence, tweens can have difficulty being grateful. They often display negative attitudes and complain that life is unfair. But with guidance, tweens can better recognize the many blessings in their lives—family, possessions, friendships and freedoms. They can learn to turn a poor attitude into one that is thankful in all circumstances.

To help your child understand the value of gratitude, download the complimentary Adventures in Odyssey episode "A Thankstaking Story" at [WhitsEndBlog.org/thriving](http://WhitsEndBlog.org/thriving) during November. Whit, Connie, Eugene and a few of their friends end up snowbound at Whit's End on Thanksgiving Day. Although their holiday starts with a setback, the group passes the time by making up a story about the Scrunch, a character determined to derail Thanksgiving.

To get the most out of this complimentary download, use the summary and discussion questions link on the same page. —Andrea Gutierrez

